

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
August 24, 2015 by audio-conference
Juneau, AK

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. Members and staff pledged allegiance to the flag. The board adopted the agenda unanimously. There were no conflicts of interest.

Public Comment

Amy Brabec, a teacher at Chugach Optional Elementary School, asked about alternate assessments for alternative schools.

Pam Rowell, a teacher at Chugach Optional Elementary School, said assessments should be used to inform instruction and not to evaluate teachers.

Ron Fuhrer, president of NEA-Alaska, said results from student evaluations are not suitable for the evaluation of teachers or schools. Additionally, he said the Alternate Assessment recognizes that one size does not fit all. He approved of the regulation changes in the packet.

Christina Von Walter, a teacher at Chugach Optional Elementary School, said assessments lead to spending more time on test preparation and less time on meaningful activities.

David Nees said he approved of the department's score-setting process but not the proposed accountability regulations. He said teachers need the motivation of being held accountable.

Eric Linscheid of Kodiak, a retired teacher, asked if the state could strategize with schools on how to improve educators in a nurturing environment.

Teresa Eckel, a teacher at Chugach Optional Elementary School, was concerned about using results from the AIMSweb assessment in evaluating teachers.

Jenny Loudon, a parent at Chugach Optional Elementary School, likewise was concerned about using results from the AIMSweb assessment in evaluating teachers.

Christina Von Walter, a teacher at Chugach Optional Elementary School, said the noon hour was an inconvenient time for teachers to provide public comments to the board.

Work Session

Agenda Item 1A. Assessment Achievement Level Scores. Margaret MacKinnon, Director of Assessment & Accountability, summarized the process by which educators recommended achievement level scores to the department. Ms. MacKinnon referred the board to the impact data in the board packet. She explained the Alaska Alternate Assessment.

John Harmon said a recent poll shows that people believe there is too much student testing and that results from student assessments are not the best way to evaluate teachers.

Commissioner Hanley said assessments are a valuable way to understand how well we are meeting students' needs. He pointed out that Alaska has reduced its standardized testing. The Alaska Measures of Progress are not high-stakes tests; rather, they inform parents and the public.

John Harmon asked if the state offers flexibility for students who are not good test-takers.

Commissioner Hanley said the Alaska Measures of Progress, which is administered on computers, offers students tools to take the test better; it is not a pass/fail test or a high-stakes test, and it is not timed.

In response to a question, Ms. MacKinnon said 780 is the highest possible score on the Alaska Measures of Progress.

Alec Burris asked about the effect of test results on schools' ability to provide individual learning plans.

Commissioner Hanley said individual learning plans apply to correspondence schools; all of their students must have individual learning plans.

James Fields said he approved of the score-setting process. He asked why the department no longer uses the term "proficient."

Commissioner Hanley said "proficient" does not recognize a growth continuum. "Proficient" seemed to be a label. And the department did not want to suggest that the Alaska Measures of Progress is a pass/not pass test.

Agenda Item 2A. Student Accountability and Educator Accountability. Dr. Susan McCauley, Director of Teaching & Learning Support, and Sondra Meredith, Administrator of Teacher Certification & Quality, were available by phone to address the agenda item.

The board reviewed many of the written public comments and asked department staff to respond.

John Harmon asked if teacher evaluation would be part of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Mr. Harmon expressed concern about adopting new regulations on this topic before the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is reauthorized.

Commissioner Hanley said that if the act is reauthorized, the department will look at what has been changed.

John Harmon asked if the educator evaluation regulations place unfunded mandates on school districts.

Commissioner Hanley said the school districts have been working on their evaluation plans for a year and a half. The department has worked with school districts, Dr. McCauley said.

Agenda Item 3A. Assessment Achievement Level Scores.

Sue Hill moved and Kenny Gallahorn seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on 4 AAC 06.737 Standards-based test, 4 AAC 06.739 Assessment achievement level scores, 4 AAC 06.775 Statewide assessment program for students with disabilities, 4 AAC 06.815 Annual measurable objectives, 4 AAC 06.820 Participation, 4 AAC 06.899 Definitions, 4 AAC 33.421 Correspondence study program requirements, 4 AAC 33.426 Core course requirements, 4 AAC 34.090 Definitions.

Sue Hull, Barbara Thompson, and John Harmon said they and others were impressed with the process of recommending achievement level scores.

The motion passed in a unanimous roll-call vote.

Agenda Item 4A. Student Accountability and Educator Accountability.

Barbara Thompson moved and Dr. Keith Hamilton seconded the following motion: After considering all public comment, I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed amendments to regulations 4 AAC 04.205, District Performance Standards; 4 AAC 06.815, Annual Measurable Objectives; 4 AAC 06.817, Change in Assessments; 4 AAC 06.820, Participation; 4 AAC 06.895, Report Card to the Public; 4 AAC 19.010, Purpose of Evaluations; 4 AAC 19.030, Method for Evaluating Professional Employees; 4 AAC 19.055, Reporting of Evaluation Results; and 4 AAC 19.099 Definitions.

The motion passed 6-1, with John Harmon voting “no.”

Agenda Item 5A. Approve the appointment of Shawn Sypeck.

Barbara Thompson moved and John Harmon seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the appointment of Shawn Sypeck as executive secretary to the Commissioner and the board. The board approved the motion unanimously.

Board comments

Alec Burris thanked the department.

John Harmon said he looked forward to the board’s meeting in Sitka.

Barbara Thompson said some of the public who commented seemed to be confused about the Alternate Assessment and the use of AIMsweb.

Chair Fields said the board has received a good response to its recent survey.

The board adjourned at 1:30 p.m.